The Builder.

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NCIENT sepulchral slabs and crosses have recently received much attention. One of the most recent works on the subject is that by the Rev. Edward L. Cutts, B.A.,—one of the "Archæological Manuals," published under the sanction of the Archæological Institute,* and forming the first portion of the subject of "Monumental Antiquities." The number which remain of these slabs and crosses may be judged of from the author's remark, that 1,000 of them have come under his own notice. In his work he gives drawings of many, and divides them into the three classes: — 1. *Incised Cross Slabs*, 2. *Raised Cross Slabs*, and 3. *Head Crosses*.

In the course of his introductory remarks, Mr. Cutts notices the circumstance, which is not without a lesson, that in Sussex, where iron foundries existed from an early period, *cast-iron coffin-slabs* occur. There is an example at Burwash, Sussex, with a small cross and inscription, "ORATE PRO ANNIMA JOHNE COLINS." A kindred example of later date exists at Crowhurst, Surrey, which bears a figure in shroud (Anne Forster), kneeling children, shields, and inscription, date A.D. 1591. An example with inscription only exists at Cowden, Kent.

The variety of designs made from the cross, or from the combination of the cross and circle (which latter may be intended for a nimbus), is quite extraordinary, and shows the invention of the mediæval artists: actual repetition is very rare, though the modifications are in many instances very slight. "It may be sometimes rather difficult for an unpractised eye at once to see the cross in some of the complicated designs, but the idea of the cross seems to have been so ever present in the minds of the mediæval Christians, that they at once caught at anything which formed even a remote resemblance to the emblem of our faith. In two intersecting roads they saw the cross, and chose these *cross* roads as places peculiarly suitable for the erection of their village and station crosses: the soldier stuck his sword upright in the earth, and its hilt formed the cross before which he prayed."

In the fourteenth century the cross is sometimes composed of leaves and branches of the vine: the lilies, commonly used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as terminations, were probably in allusion to the Virgin Mary.

Amongst the symbols inscribed on ancient gravestones, many are personal and indicate the rank and profession of the deceased. The crozier is the symbol of an archbishop; the mitre and pastoral staff refer both to bishops and mitred abbots; the chalice, so often observable, is the symbol of an ecclesiastic; the paten and chalice often occur together, as do the chalice and book (of the Gospels), and the chalice and cruet, perhaps that in which the baptismal chrism was kept. A shield or a sword may stand for a knight; the knife may be the symbol of the official "kerver" in some great family, and the knife and dredging-box appear on the slab over Cannynge's cook, buried in Redcliffe Church, Bristol. Shears may stand for a clothier, although they were sometimes used to designate a female.

To determine the date of gravestones is not at all times easy,—they do not present the same marked characteristics of certain periods as are found in buildings; the form of the cross, the accidental ornaments, the inscription, if any, must all be looked to for assistance in the inquiry. "From c. A.D. 1000, till about A.D. 1350, a kind of Roman character called Lombardic was commonly used. The latest instance we meet with of Lombardic (says Gough, vol. iii. p. ccxlvi.) is on the tomb of Robert de Bures, Acton, A.D. 1361. The character called black letter seems to have been introduced c. A.D. 1350: it is used on the tomb of Edward III., who died A.D. 1377; and from this period it was in common use until c. A.D. 1530. About this time a debased kind of Lombardic became very fashionable, and gradually changed until about the middle of the sixteenth century, when it became the common Roman character.

Moreover from c. 1100 to c. A.D. 1360, the inscription, though often in Latin, was more frequently in Norman French, and generally in rhyme. From c. A.D. 1400 downwards, Latin became the common language for inscriptions, though English ones are not uncommon after c. A.D. 1500."

The inscriptions had little variety; nearly all of the same age followed one conventional form. Thus from the year 600 to 1000, the inscription seems to have been — "Pray for the soul of ——." In the thirteenth and early part of the fourteenth century,—"SIRE——GIST ICI DEU DE SA ALME EST MERCI."

"From the middle of the fourteenth to the latter part of the fifteenth century, the conventional form appears to have been, 'Hic jacet Dns —— cujus anime propitietur Deus. Amen.'

A not uncommon addition in this period is, 'Jesu merci. Ladie help.' Sometimes it is the sole inscription.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, longer inscriptions began to grow common; and in the succeeding centuries, such a mode was adopted that one might naturally ask with the little girl who had looked round a churchyard, 'Pray, mamma, where are the naughty people buried?' and to 'lie like an epitaph,' became a mode of comparison. Many epitaphs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as we have often had occasion to say, are positively blasphemous.

We are enabled to give some examples of the excellent engravings, by which the work before us is illustrated.* Fig. 1 is a Norman headstone (of the twelfth century), from Temple Bruer, Lincolnshire; and Fig. 2, one of later date from the churchyard of St. Mary Le Wigford, Lincoln, probably of thirteenth century: this is an interesting specimen.

Fig. 3 is a beautiful Early English slab (thirteenth century), from Great Milton, Oxfordshire; and fig. 4, probably early in fourteenth century, is from Barnwell, Northamptonshire: the scale is 1 inch to a foot. The incised lines connecting the upper and lower parts of this design are very singular.

We have often pointed out that the finest carved works in our mediæval buildings are studies from nature, and have urged on our designers that *to natural forms geometrically disposed*, they must look for new inspirations. The crosses to which we have just now alluded afford other instances of the same fact. Mr. Pugin, we observe, has adopted the same doctrine, and his new work, "Floriated Ornament," is an exposition of what he was himself able to do in this way. The great point is to lead designers back to first principles:—"as by repeated copying the spirit of the original work is liable to be lost, so in decoration the constant reproduction of old patterns, without reference to the natural type from which they were composed, leads to debased forms and spiritless outline, and in the end to a mere caricature of a beautiful original. It is impossible to improve on the works of God; and the natural outlines of leaves, flowers, &c., must be more perfect and beautiful than any invention of man."

Returning to Sepulchral Memorials, we may here mention a second work on the same subject now in course of publication, namely, "Christian Monuments in England and Wales; an Historical and Descriptive Sketch of the various classes of Sepulchral Monuments which have been in use in this Country from about the era of the Norman Conquest," by the Rev. Charles Boutell, M.A.* Mr. Boutell and Mr. Cutts tread the same ground to a considerable extent, and give the same illustrations; the work of the former, however, is to take a wider range than that of Mr. Cutts, as it is to include monumental effigies, semi-effigial monuments, altar tombs, and canopies. As a specimen of the writer's style, we will quote his notice of the materials used in the construction of monuments:—

"The materials of which the mediæval monuments were for the most part constructed, were—

"I. Marble or Stone; comprising purbeck and forest marble, alabaster, various kinds of sandstone, &c. Monumental coffins and slabs, altar-tombs, canopies, and effigies, were commonly formed altogether of marble or stone.

"II. Wood; generally oak or chestnut. The upper parts of altar-tombs were sometimes made of wood, as in the monument of William de Valence, in Westminster Abbey: wood was also occasionally used for the construction of canopies, and even of effigies.

"III. A mixed metal denominated Latten, but now generally known as brass. Effigies, in full relief, were occasionally executed in this metal; also the small effigies or weepers, which were placed in niches about the sides of many of the more important altar-tombs. Plates of this metal were laid upon altar-tombs to support recumbent effigies. Narrow and long plates, or fillets, were also fixed in hollows, abated or sunk for their reception in the uppermost group of the mouldings of these tombs. These fillets bore inscriptions and were set chamfer-wise—on a slope that is—with the adjoining mouldings. But the most common use of the latten metal was in plates, which were engraven with effigies and various other designs, and, being affixed to slabs of stone, were laid in the pavement of churches, or, in some cases, were placed on altar-tombs. Monuments of this class are known as brasses.

In the decoration of the more costly and elaborate monuments, enamel was not unfrequently introduced: gilding and colour were also used for the same purpose, and with a lavish hand. Now these gorgeous accessories for the most part have disappeared, leaving, as tokens of their former existence, but here and there some lingering remains. There is one other mode of decoration employed by the mediæval artists for monumental purposes, which requires to be noticed; this is the use of a composition spread upon the marble or stone, in which any minute elaboration of details might be expressed, in place of the more tedious process

* "A Manual for the Study of the Sepulchral Slabs and Crosses of the Middle Ages." J. H. Parker, London and Oxford.

* Some of the references we must here remark, appear defective, and should be revised: thus the border in plate xxxix. is pointed out as of the thirteenth century (p. 53), while the plate itself is headed twelfth century. Further, reference is in one place made to illustrations by numbers, which do not appear on the plates.

* Published by G. Bell, Fleet-street. Parts I. and II. Two more to follow.

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